

Working With Your Child's Teacher

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When planning your child's IEP for the coming year, the teacher will ask for information from you to help determine skills to teach. The teacher may send home a written survey, or discuss this with you when she calls to set up the IEP meeting. This is your opportunity to share your concerns about your child's behaviors with the teacher. In the classroom, they may be using positive supports that are improving your child's behaviors.

In the survey or during the phone call, tell the teacher about the behavior challenges you face at home or in the community. The teacher will want to know your needs to be better able to address skills that will be appropriate for your child in all environments. By thinking through situations, the teacher will be able to identify skills to teach at school that will help the student be successful in home and community situations.

The teacher can also share the classroom skills with you and give you tips on how to implement these skills yourself at home. Below are a few examples of common difficult situations and the steps you can take to help your child develop better responses

Does your child have difficulty waiting while you prepare dinner in the evening?	
<p><i>Behavior:</i> Child can't wait or entertain self while the meal is being prepared. May scream and grab everything in sight.</p> <p><i>Possible causes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bored • Needs attention • Wants to be somewhere else • Wants to be doing something else • Wants you to be doing something else 	<p><i>Positive support strategy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather some materials that will be used only during meal preparation time. • Let your child select an item to play with while you are preparing the meal. • Set a timer to remind you to check and see if your child is getting tired of the item. • The timer should be set so your child can be successful sitting at the table playing with the item. This could range from a minute to 10 minutes or more. • When the timer goes off, give your child some attention and see if she wants to keep the item she has or get a new one. Then set the timer again. • While preparing the meal, engage your child in conversation. Let her choose some part of the meal, such as deciding between green beans or corn.
Is eating out in a restaurant with the family an enjoyable experience?	
<p><i>Behavior:</i> Child yells, runs around restaurant, grabs things.</p> <p><i>Possible causes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many distractions • Meal takes too long - can't wait • Too much stimulation 	<p><i>Positive support strategy:</i> Two different versions depending on how your child reacts to the situation.</p> <p>1. Extreme situation – child can sit only for a minute or less</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go during non-busy time. • Get one item for child. • Sit down either in quiet non-crowded area inside or go outside to tables. • When child has finished eating, it is time to

	<p>go.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise child. <p>2. Child can sit and wait but not through a whole meal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go during non-busy time • Get one item for child • Sit down either in quiet non-crowded area inside or go outside to tables. • Give your child a little of his food at a time. Example: You hold the bag of fries and place two or three fries at a time on a napkin for your child. As soon as he picks up the fries to eat, you put a few more fries on the napkin. Your child should always have a little food in front of him. • When child has finished eating, it is time to go. • Praise child. <p>After two successful visits using the above procedure, take longer and longer to give small portions of food to your child, so that he learns to wait for food.</p> <p>Eventually, add more items to your child's meal at the restaurant.</p> <p>Then you will be able to order something to eat there. When your child has finished eating, it is time to go. Take your leftovers with you.</p> <p>Slowly add some time for your child to wait by giving him something to do or play with until you have enough time to finish eating your meal.</p>
<p>Can you take your child to the store with you and get your shopping done without incidents?</p>	
<p><i>Behavior:</i> Child grabs things off the shelf when walking through the store with mom.</p> <p><i>Possible Causes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many distractions and too much stimulation -- can't focus • Not interested in walking through store • Wants more individual attention 	<p><i>Positive support strategy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare your child for the activity. Tell her a story with pictures (even if they are stick figures) about what you are getting ready to do and what the expectation will be. Example: Say, "We are going to the store. We will get out of the car and walk through the door, then get a cart. I will get milk and bread and you will get a box of pudding, then we will pay and carry our sack to the car." • Practice first with very short trips. Go in the store, pick up two or three things, let your child pick up her item, then leave. • Walk with your child holding on to the cart handle or have her help push the cart.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child may hold onto a favorite item or a small basket to carry her purchase. • Make a picture list of item(s) your child will shop for. As you come to the appropriate section of the store, let her take the item from the shelf and put it into her basket. Take the picture of the item off her list or cross it off. • When possible, let your child choose the flavor of the item she is purchasing. • Praise your child as you leave the store. <p>As your child is successful, gradually increase the number of items each of you purchase on each shopping trip.</p>
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In addition to the situations listed above, practice the following positive support strategies to make a difference in the way your child responds to difficult situations:

- Increase your child's control and choices
 - Reinforce good choices and add new activities.
- Praise frequently
 - Don't ignore your child if he is being good.
 - If ignored for being good, your child will get your attention by going back to negative behaviors.
- Let your child be a helper
 - This provides your attention to the child in a positive way and your child is learning something useful to her in other settings.
- Reinforce tasks attempted and/or done well
 - Reinforce any type of success.
- Decrease length of activity (example: sitting at dinner with family)
 - Start with a length of time your child can manage.
 - Slowly add more time, but don't rush it.

Reinforcements for your child may vary. The key is that the reinforcement comes soon after the good behavior you are encouraging. Here are some ideas for reinforcement:

- verbal praise or attention
- immediate food reinforcements (small pieces of any food item your child likes)
- specific activities your child enjoys, such as visiting the ice cream store after a shopping trip, or watching a favorite video or listening to music after successfully following a new behavior at home.

Building good behavior will be more long-lasting than trying to control inappropriate behaviors. People who develop appropriate behaviors from positive behavioral supports improve their confidence and self esteem and increase their independence. Remember that a person can be successful in any environment with the right support.

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